

practical service, and the Rev. Alan A. Brash's study of 'The Church's *Diakonia* in the Modern World' demonstrates how much we can learn in the realm of Christian service from the thinking and acting of the Christian Churches in Asia. Finally, Professor D. M. Mackinnon's reflections on 'Diakonia in Modern Conditions' shows that parables of the ultimate *diakonia* of Jesus Christ can be found in all sorts of unexpected places in the world in which we live. The Epworth Press is to be congratulated on the production of a beautiful volume the clear print of which makes the reading of this book a delightful experience.

H. HARTWELL

Connaître Christ. By REGIN PRENTER, Delachaux et Niestlé, 1966. Pp. 188. Sw. Fr. 15.

THIS book should be translated into English. The Danish Lutheran theologian from Aarhus, Professor Regin Prenter has placed many outwith his own particular confession greatly in his debt. The basic text consists of his course of lectures on Christology delivered in the Faculté de Théologie Protestante de l'Université de Strasbourg during the academic session of 1962-3. The French text has been produced by Dom Jean Evrard, O.S.B. Throughout, the living quality and atmosphere of the lecture hall have not been lost.

No one need apologise for yet another book on Christology. Ecumenism as understood in some areas of the twentieth-century Christian Church is not far removed from syncretism. Dr Willard Gurdon Oxtoby, writing in *Theology Today*, October 1966, on 'the post-ecumenical era', made his point forcibly: 'For why should one stop with Christian unity? Is not the logical next step a post-"ecumenical" era of interreligious community? Ecumenism—defined in terms of Christianity alone—is about to become old-fashioned and in three decades it will seem downright reactionary.' If the Christian faith is to survive in its distinctive form, there must be a constant return to the dogmatic probing of the central tenets of our Christian confession. That is precisely the object of Prenter's book.

To begin with the reader is introduced to certain methodological problems in Christology: (a) the relationship between Christology and science; (b) the sources of Christology, which Prenter defines as the OT and NT together forming the written tradition, and the oral tradition which is the confession of the *culte chrétien* (preaching, prayer and sacraments); (c) on Christology and dogma we have the salutary reminder that the role of dogma is not to be defined as a positive interpretation of the faith, but a necessary defence, mapping out the direction in which thought can proceed while avoiding heresy; (d) on the relationship between Christology and philosophy

Prenter refuses to be trapped in 'the splendid isolationism' of a positivism, rooted in Revelation, that refuses all dialogue with philosophy. Philosophy and Christology must engage in constant encounter, if the threat of pagan values is to be countered.

One of the many exciting things about this book is the readiness of the author to break a lance in exposing the errors of existentialist theology. Bultmann is repeatedly under attack and it is difficult to see how Prenter's position can be assailed by the supporters of an existentialist hermeneutic. Not only Bultmann's failure to hold together *das Dass* and *das Was* which lead to a docetic devaluation of the humanity of our Lord but also Gogarten's metaphysic (see p. 183) come in for devastating criticism. Indeed the ground plan of Prenter's thinking with his declared intention of holding together the Jesus of history and the Christ of the *kerygma* of necessity ensures that battle is engaged from the start.

Unlike most traditional christological studies Prenter's approach is determined by a decision to begin with the original confession of the Church and therefore with the doctrine of the present, risen Christ and *thereafter* to go on to the doctrine of the Jesus of the written, historical tradition. To the author's knowledge (pp. 40-41) only one similar attempt has been made—a course of the lectures by Bonhoeffer in the summer of 1933 (published posthumously in the *Gesammelte Schriften*). Working from this premise Prenter proceeds to adumbrate a christology of the Kingdom of God, cutting behind the vexed questions of how we may conceive of two natures in one person. The divinity of our Lord is not to be interpreted in any kind of static, substantialist sense. Rather must we think of our Lord's humanity and divinity dynamically. Jesus is man, but He is also Son of God, *vere Deus*, because in Him the Kingdom of God is dynamically declared and made present among men. Prenter can then conclude, using the classical language of Christology, that Jesus is at once our brother, *consubstantialis nobis* and at the same time He is the Son of God, *consubstantialis Patri*, while claiming that the traditional difficulties of Christology concerning the unity of two natures in one person have disappeared. The reader will judge for himself.

The final section of the last chapter significantly entitled *Verbum Incarnatum* provides a penetrating critique of the various types of ontology—supernaturalism, naturalism and existentialism—which have exercised an influence on Christology. This leads to the question: 'Perhaps we ought to try and establish a specifically Christian ontology, a *philosophia christiana*?' (p. 185). Tantalisingly the reader is left suspended in an uncertainty of speculation, for the author answers his own question by affirming at once yes and no.

Although the author has not turned a blind eye to the problems of philosophical theology this is unashamedly a volume on biblical Christology. Novelty of approach and substance are combined with fresh insight in the painstaking analysis of a variety of exegetical positions. At every point careful academic scholarship is subservient to a dominant concern for the heart of the Gospel. This is a book for the theologian, the exegete, the philosopher *and* the preacher commissioned to win men for Christ.

RICHMOND SMITH

A Question of Conscience. By CHARLES DAVIS. Hodder and Stoughton, London, 1967. Pp. 251. 30s.

CHARLES DAVIS, one of the best known Roman Catholic theologians in Great Britain, caused a considerable stir at home and abroad when on 21st December 1966 he announced that he had left the Roman Church in whose priesthood he had served for twenty years. While his break with Rome coincided more or less with his marriage, he made it clear that his decision to get married had nothing to do with him leaving his Church.

In *A Question of Conscience* Davis elaborates on what he had already said in various statements to the Press: he left the Roman Church (and did not join another Church) because he had ceased to believe in it. He admits that he finds himself in a paradoxical position: he is still a Christian, but he is a Christian without a Church.

The explanation why he left the Roman Church is very simple: it lost credibility for him. In his view 'the Christian Church is intended as a dynamic force at the service of mankind . . . leading its true advance towards a unity grounded upon God through Christ. . . . The new community of Christ is not confined to the visible Church but extends beyond it wherever the same values and aims are recognised and cherished, even if only implicitly. What the Christian Church does is to render visible the nature of the unity towards which mankind is being drawn, and by explicit faith to acknowledge its basis in Christ. In doing so, it serves as a means for the promotion of that unity. . . . Faith . . . demands an openness to love. . . . Faith is a personal commitment and, in the concrete, a commitment to other persons. It is the acceptance of a new community of all men in Christ.'

Davis rejects the Roman Church because from the Constantinian era onwards it has gradually developed into a kingly and imperial structure of power. It has now ceased to be credible because as a social structure it is no longer a credible embodiment of Christian faith, hope and love. In fact the Church of Rome is inimical to the Christian faith because it has become a zone of untruth, pervaded